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Organic & Intentional: A Study of Network Theory and Nonprofit Collaboration in the
High Country

by

Genevieve Paige Parshley

Honors Thesis (Project)

Appalachian State University

Submitted to the Department of Communication
and The Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Bachelor of Science

May, 2015

Approved by:

Janice T. Pope, Ph.D., Thesis Director

Jennifer Warren, MA, Second Reader

Jennifer Gray, Ph.D., Department of Communication Honors Director

Leslie Sargent Jones, Ph.D., Director, The Honors College

Abstract

If there is one thing that I have learned throughout my collegiate experiences both on campus and in the community, it is that there is a unique, effectual power that comes from organizations and entities that pursue collaboration. In just the past few decades, the theories behind the concept of networks and their unique styles of governance have begun to be studied and analyzed more thoroughly. Through this research, it has become evident that there is indeed a distinct power in collaboration. This collaboration comes in all shapes, sizes and structures and to better understand those differences, I will be conducting a literature review on a selection of the most prominent research on the subjects of network theory, network governance and collaboration. In order to create a more comprehensive illustration of collaboration, I will be conducting a case study on the Greening My Plate event series that was created by a coalition of 21 individuals and nonprofit organizations. The Greening My Plate series is a month long event promoting local food and healthy eating within the community. It is in its second year so I will be conducting interviews with both previous and current participants to gauge the unique structure, operations, and relationships exhibited within the planning coalition. At the end of this paper, I hope to have created a benchmark analysis of what nonprofit collaboration looks like within a community based on modern networking theories.

Main Body

Hurricane Katrina Relief. Post-Earthquake Relief in Haiti. American Red Cross Blood Ban Protests. Soup Kitchens. Bake Sales. Google Documents. At this point, you might be asking what the common thread is amongst each of these seemingly random events. The answer is, simply, that each event either initiated or was initiated by collaboration. The premise is this: although one individual may have significant impact on his/her own, more can be accomplished when individuals ban together, forming a coalition, team, group, unit or even a couple. From ancient texts such as The Bible that assert “a chord of three strands is not easily broken” to activists like Dr. King who believe “there is power in numbers and there is power in unity,” the concept of collaboration is longstanding and pervasive (King, 1963). It is a concept so powerful that it holds weight on a global scale with organizations like the United Nations and European Union. However, this study of collaboration and organizational networking asserts that the most effectual change occurs within our own communities, on the local level. To further analyze this hypothesis, I have conducted a case study on the Greening My Plate month-long series of community-based events and the organization(s) that collaborated to both create it.

Literature Review

The literature surrounding the study of collaboration, networking and network governance (also referred to as governance networks) is modern in the sense that they are concepts that have only truly and thoroughly been studied within the past two or three decades. Despite its newness, the literature is vast and in this study, I seek to connect the various branches of research for a more cohesive and comprehensive understanding.

When discussing collaboration, I am referring to the “process through which plurality of actors aim to arrive at a common definition of problems and challenges, manage conflicts in a constructive way and find joint solutions based on provisional agreements that may coexist with disagreements and dissent” (Torfing, 2013, p. 305; Grey, 1989). Networks or the concept of networking refers to “an interdependent set of independent organizations that require centralized coordination of necessarily autonomous organizations” (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 45). The term “governance networks” is a fairly new one, only being discussed heavily in academic literature since the 1980s. Sorensen and Torfing (2005), the two primary authorities commonly referred to in studies of “network governance,” however, coined its widely accepted definition as

a relatively stable horizontal articulation of interdependent, but operationally autonomous actors who interact through negotiations that involve bargaining, deliberation and intense power struggles, which take place within a relatively institutionalized framework of contingently articulated rules, norms, knowledge and social imaginations that is self-regulation within limits set by external

agencies and which contribute to the production of public purpose in the broad sense of visions, ideas, plans and regulations (p. 3).

This concept of governance networks holds substantial weight in the dissection of any modern events, coalitions or processes involving multiple organizations, specifically nonprofit organizations (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 2). However, network governance theory is not the only theory relevant in the modern study of organizational interaction. Before delving further into network governance, other theories and classifications must be considered and discussed.

Three Main Organizational Theories

In traditional studies of organizational theory, there are mainly two basic classifications: market and hierarchy, and more recently, a third, network theory. Each of these is discussed briefly below.

Market Theory. Market theory is one that assumes “collaboration based on necessity” (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 3). In other words, there is an exchange of resources both tangible and intangible such as labor and skills that promotes two or more organizations working with one another (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 3). In these market-based relationships, there is “low-assumed commitment” and parties are labeled as fairly independent (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 3). An important measure of analyzing each of these organizational theories, in addition to the nature of their interaction, is their style of conflict management or resolution mechanism. In the case of market theory, the conflict

style is based on legal action (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 3). Within a market-style collaboration, there is a stronger emphasis on competition driving innovation (Torfing, 2013).

Hierarchy Theory. The second major theory referenced in literature is hierarchy. In this style of collaboration, the relationships between organizations are focused on superior-subordinate relationships and a dependency on one another (Saz-Carranza, 1976). Conflicts within a hierarchy are typically resolved by administrative sanctions and the commitment level of those organizations involved, though higher than that of those in the market style, is mediocre (Saz-Carranza, 1976). According to Torfing (2013), “the combination of hierarchal command systems, bureaucratic silos and strong professional identities tends to prevent [organizations] from reaping the fruits of collaboration” (p. 306).

Network Theory. The flaws within each of the aforementioned theories indicate a need for a third and stronger option—network theory. Networks “provide a valuable and somewhat underexplored supplement to hierarchies and markets in the field of public innovation” (Torfing, 2013, p. 306). Network theory paints a picture of flat plane for interaction amongst organizations that encourages loyalty and cooperation (Saz-Carranza, 1976). Within these organizational interactions, the emphasis is on reciprocity, commitment, and the reputations of each participating group (Saz-Carranza, 1976). Networks are characterized by consistent negotiation and a proclivity toward mutual

adjustment and compromise when a conflict is presented (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.5; Ebers, 1997; Grandori & Sodi, 1995; Kickert, Klink & Koppenjan, 1997; Powell, 1990).

In this paper, I propose that of the three theories discussed, network theory allows for a more comprehensive analysis of the Greening My Plate (GMP) coalition. Both market and hierarchy theories contain distinct aspects within them that could be applied to GMP. Despite the positive qualities within them, ultimately, market and hierarchy theory's limitations of rigidity, legalistic conflict management and structure outweigh those qualities. In other words, the GMP coalition is best defined by network theory so a further in-depth analysis of this theory's components, complexities and structure is contained in the following sections.

Network Theory: Spectrum & Structure

Networks are, by definition, an “interdependent set of independent organizations that require centralized coordination of necessarily autonomous organizations” (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 45). This coordination, however, resides on a spectrum, which contains informational, action and goal-directed networks (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 6). In these informational networks, it is mainly the exchange of resources that motivates a sort of formal style of collaboration, not unlike that of the market theory referenced earlier. The second classification of networks is action-based. These action networks “execute joint advocacy actions, with a shared brand and integrated operations” and have a “formal centralized coordinating unit” also known as Network Administrative Organizations (NAOs) (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 6). The end point on the spectrum lies with goal-directed networks. These types of networks differ from the other two in that a specific form of

governance directs them towards the accomplishment of a shared goal within their field or industry. Goal-directed networks have become increasingly more important to success in collaboration towards “multi-organizational outcomes, especially in the public and nonprofit sectors where collective action is often required for problem solving” (Provan & Kenis, 2008, p. 231; Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 8).

In addition to this spectrum of networks, there are also specific styles of structure by which they are identified and defined: operational, deep structure, relational structure, and organic vertical structure (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 66). The structure of the network is fundamental in the overall success of the collaboration due to the power of infrastructure in facilitating interactions of network member organizations (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 65). The first structural style is operational; it contains formal rules and procedures for the organization. Deep structure is the second major network structure classification and it is based on informal organizational norms and values. In other words, it is more organic than operational. The third classification is relational structure. Relational structure networks exhibit a higher degree of focus on the intricacies of relationships between the network's members and the “stable patterns of links” that bind them. (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 66). Organic vertical structure is the fourth style applied to networks. It is, according to Saz-Carranza (1976) “like a multi-layered cake” (p. 74). Similar to the deep structure style, it is more organic in how it affects member organization relationships; it intertwines members into the network at both the basic operational level as well as at higher board levels (Saz-Carranza, 1976). Member positions range from executive directors and project coordinators to community members and volunteers all working

together. Despite the higher level of complexity within this theory, it is distinctly beneficial for conflict management and overall success in collaboration.

Overall, the framing or “setting of the formal structure of networks” is a newer phenomenon and one that is highly contextualized (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.74). In addition, despite the superiority of networks overall in theory and practice, these “traditional networks and organizations have lost their mobilizing force in many Western countries” (Robbeband & Duyvendak, 2013, p. 95). In fact, Robbeband and Duyvendak (2013) go as far to as to assert that communities of individuals are becoming more fragmented with time (p. 95). Due to this developing societal reality, network theory has been dissected further into theories of network governance, with a distinct focus on context, design and public management (Torfing, 2013, p. 307). It is in those interactions that “social and political actors realize that they cannot solve the problems they are facing alone and do not possess the relevant knowledge, skills or resources” (Torfing, 2013, p.305) to do so.

Network Governance: Paradigms, Paradoxes, and Potential Problems

Paradigms. As stated above, a high value is placed upon contextual factors when discerning the type of network governance at play amongst organizations. On the same level of importance as contextual factors resides the institutional design of the network (see structures above) and public management and/or leadership (Torfing, 2013, 307). Each of these aspects is at work in various ways in the following network theories.

The first theory is Rational Choice Institutionalism. In this theory, the actors are calculating in their collaboration with the premise of making “satisfactory rather than optimal choices (Torfing, 2013, p.309).” According to Torfing (2013), the organizations and individuals involved in this style of network governance act upon the basis of “bounded rationality” (309). There is also a large emphasis on risk management and assessment within this theory as well as on incentive structures as tools for motivation; this is one of its major criticisms.

The second theory is Normative Institutionalism. It is primarily focused on the institution or network as a unit rather than on the individual players that make it up. There is, however, an acknowledgement of how the actors are “relevant” to one another and “affected” by a unifying factor (Torfing, 2013, p.301). While the actual agency of the individual is not focused upon in this theory, recognition is given to how the individuals each work together under specific “institutional roles and cultural norms” to develop, test and evaluate new ideas pragmatically (Torfing, 2013, p.311).

Interpretative Governance Theory focuses on individual actors and the meanings that they are constructing and acting upon rather than on the function of the institution as a whole (Bevir, 2010). Rather than incentive structures holding weight in this theory as it does in Rational Choice Institutionalism, the focus is on the power of narrative in motivation (Torfing, 2013). In this theory, the individual has agency in the sense that

his/her traditions and beliefs are given weight. This theory is criticized, however, for its failure to adequately provide clarity on how it functions as an institution (Torfing, 2013).

The fourth theory is Network Management Theory and it is akin to the Rational Choice Institutionalism Theory. However, it has a slightly more pronounced focus on the interaction of interdependent individuals involved within the network. The primary feature of this theory is the nature of “mutual resource dependency” that brings the actors or organizations together to form the initial network (Torfing, 2013, 312). The major criticism of this theory, however, is the fact that network itself is formed based on feelings of necessity and “getting things done” rather than focusing on collaboration and innovation (Torfing, 2013, 313).

Governmentality Theory is the fifth and final type of network governance and its primary focus is on the movement of the whole network or body and its progress and function, not on the individual actors. What differentiates this theory from Interpretative Governance Theory is the fact that it focuses on the self-regulatory nature of crafting solutions and does not reference how the personal beliefs and traditions of individual actors affect the network’s function (Torfing, 2013, p. 313). Another major facet of this theory is its emphasis on the power of the network to initiate agenda-setting within and outside its environment.

Paradoxes. One of the most prominent features of Network Governance is its constant operation through the juxtaposition of its two key features: unity and diversity.

According to Saz-Carranza (1976), “group life is inherently paradoxical” in a variety of ways (39). One of these interactions is “dealing with unity and diversity simultaneously, generating a paradoxical tension” (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.2). It is these polarized notions of unity and diversity that interact in such a way that, as Saz-Carranza argues, they actually have the capacity to deliver advantageous results (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.2). This paradoxical tension requires that those organizations involved in the network should work to discover a balance between utilizing the “unity among its members...[while] building on existing diversity amongst organizational members, which in essence contributes to the necessary resources to the network” (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.10). In the interaction of unified members working together with diverse backgrounds, there is a collaborative interaction that occurs (Sorensen & Torfing, 2011, p.301). Within collaborative interaction, there is “creative learning, cross-fertilization of ideas, coordinated implementation and the creation of joint ownership to innovative solutions” (Sorensen & Torfing, 2011, p.301).

The cross-fertilization ideas are of specific importance within governance networks as independent actors, each with their own unique set of resources and skills, band together. Networks have the power to “unite diverse members to build power,” which in turn mobilizes social change (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.56). If each organization entering the governance network were to be identical, the collaboration would be missing a key component: the rich knowledge base, which makes analysis of problems and strategy much richer (Saz-Carranza, 1976). Torfing (2013) puts this phenomenon another

way by suggesting that, “a variety of specialists broadens the common knowledge base and facilitates the cross-fertilization of ideas” (306).

Additionally, the cross-fertilization of ideas in “multi-actor collaborations [has] a large potential for spurring public innovation” (Torfing, 2013, p.305). Innovation is a “contingent process that involves the development, adoption and spread of new and creative ideas that challenge conventional wisdom and bring about a qualitative change in the established practices within a specific context (Sorensen & Torfing, 2011, p.303). In these arenas where innovation occurs, there is a generation of new ideas, selection of those ideas, implementation, a changing of existing patterns of behavior and a dissemination of new practices (Sorensen & Torfing, 2011, p.303).

In the generation of new ideas, there is the concept of diversity of experiences, ideas and resources that facilitates learning (Torfing, 2013). After the ideas are brought to the table, the selection of appropriate and optimal solutions can follow, which is where the theory of unity becomes relevant. Unity continues its importance through the implementation phase because with it “resistance is reduced” (Torfing, 2013, p.303). In the dissemination stage, the combined and expanded reach of social and professional networks is extremely important.

Potential Problems. Whenever diverse actors are seated at a table, even if that table is round, conflict is inevitable (Torfing, 2013; Saz-Carranza, 1976). As Wijen and Ansari (2006) put it, “collective interests do not always produce collective action” (2).

There is the possibility that individuals and their organizations may take advantage of the contributions of others, taking it as an opportunity to be idle (Wijen & Ansari, 2006; Torfing, 2013). In that same vein, the contributions of other actors in the network could cause what Wijen and Ansari (2006) refer to as “actor apathy” (2). This is when the expertise or power of one organization could overshadow another, causing other actors to feel insignificant (Wijen & Ansari, 2006; Torfing, 2013). Groupthink is also a possibility when diverse organizations seek to collaborate, or as Torfing (2013) describes it “a danger of perpetuation the same-world view” or “settling for the least common denominator” (308).

True change requires a unique dedication manifested as collective action. It is through collective action and the accompanying collaborative style of leadership that the aforementioned potential problems can be circumvented.

The Power of Collective Action

In the 21st century, there has been a switch from hierarchal networks to what Robbeband and Duyvendak (2013) have labeled as a shift towards “light identities and issue-oriented politics” (95). These light or liquid identities are centered around “looser engagements and issue-specific networks” (Robbeband & Duyvendak, 2013, p.96). Another way of phrasing this is to say that organizations are beginning to recognize the power of collaboration in addressing issues directly in their communities. It is, as Wijen and Ansari (2006) put it, a form of “collective action” (1).

Collective action is defined as “joint activities by a wide group of actors on the basis of mutual interests” (Wijen & Ansari, 2006, p.1). The characteristics of collective action are as follows: informal, organic, flexible, and open (Robbeband & Duyvendak, 2013). Whereas typical and traditional forms of organizational government are marked by their assumption of a single leading actor, governance in networks that exhibit collective action “is the result of completed actions as a form of social coordination” of multiple actors (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014, p.111). When the individual actors of these networks recognize their mutual interest and come together, there is collective action that leads to “collective institutional entrepreneurship.” Wijen and Ansari (2006) define collective institutional entrepreneurship as the “the process of overcoming collective inaction and achieving sustained collaboration among numerous dispersed actors to create new institutions or transform existing ones” (p. 1).

Collaborative Leadership

A key facet of this entrepreneurship is the nature of its collaborative leadership, which can either be the source of organizational tension or the solution of it (Torfing, 2013, p.308; Wijen & Ansari, 2006). The strength and value of the connection between participating organizations can depend greatly “on the centrality of the individual within the industry” who has assumed a position of leadership within the collaboration (Sorenson & Rogan, 2014, p.264).

The central individual can also be referred to by their primary role: a facilitator or moderator. The individual can either be a trained facilitator and brought in for a distinct person or they can be “organic leaders, who are connected to and familiar with

stakeholders in the interactive area” (Torfing, 2013, p.308). This connection to stakeholders within the community is key due to its direct effect on mobilizing bandwagons i.e. “interesement or alliance building, by including like-minded actors” (Wijen & Ansari, 2006, p.7). Some of the primary qualities of these leaders are as follows: reflexive, flexible, open-minded, boundary spanning, apt communicator, and resourceful (Torfing, 2013).

These individuals can be stewards, catalysts and mediators of collective initiatives, if placed in the proper position of governance within the networks. As stewards, the leader “sets initial agendas, frames collaborative efforts” (Ansel & Gash, 2008; Torfing, 2013, p.308). Under the designation of catalysts, these leading individuals exhibit an “entrepreneurial spirit, encouraging exploration of existing and emerging constraints, opportunities, and out of the box thinking” (Torfing, 2013, p.309). As a mediator, they “clarify interdependencies, manage the process, build trust, resolve disputes, construct common frameworks and remove barriers” (Torfing, 2013, p.309).

The collaborative leader’s responsibility of mediation is one of the most important for the success of collective action due to its focus on the concept of “framing.” Framing or “establishing a reference for consensus building” is a means for creating a common ground (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014, p.111). If the leader can control the structural framing of the network’s rules and procedures, then he/she can induce the process of “meaning-making and identity-forming” (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.75). This identification and reflection of the mutual interests and why each actor is relevant, important and impactful is vital for “inducing cooperation...expressing tangible and task-oriented, rather than elusive, goals” (Wijen & Ansari, 2006, p.7). Collaborative leaders can also

build “cognitive legitimation” within the communities where the collective action-based network operates by “spreading public knowledge about an issue to make it more familiar and amenable to acceptance” (Wijen & Ansari, 2006, p.7).

Additionally, trust is a crucial factor in this equation for collective action (Wijen & Ansari, 2006; Sorenson & Rogan, 2014; Saz-Carranza, 1976). Wijen and Ansari (2006) refer to trust as an “important lubricant to exchange” of thoughts, ideas, and resources (264). Through the level of trust and the strength of shared meaning created, the success of collective action and the performance of the network as a whole can be measured (Saz-Carranza, 1976, 77).

Summary

From the preceding analysis, it is appropriate to conclude that within the past decade(s), a reinvigoration of the study of organizational ecology has taken place. The results of these examinations are as follows.

Despite the presence of other types of organizational structures, network-style organizations are the most effective. Within these networks, a variety of structural designs exist to choose from; however, the epitome of these designs appears to be the organic vertical structure. The type of governance that these networks can exhibit is also varied. Though there is no well-defined superlative network theory, it is clear that the interaction of unity and diversity within the network is of the upmost importance.

Lastly, despite the possible occurrence of issues that can arise within the interaction of independent organizations, there is redemptive and preventative power in collective action and collaborative leadership.

Greening My Plate Case Study

Now that the concepts of networks, governance, collective action and collaborative leadership have been fully dissected, the Greening My Plate (GMP) month-long series of events can now be measured against each of these concepts. First, however, there must be an understanding of the history of GMP, the issues involved in local food in the community, and the coalition behind the event series.

Background

Greening My Plate (GMP) was born in the spring of 2014 in the town of Boone, North Carolina, as a series of events designed to enhance the community's knowledge on local food and celebrate the start of the 2014 Watauga County Farmer's Market. The series was and is the brainchild of Margie Mansure, an agent of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension¹. Mansure is a prominent figure in the High Country community, known for her work as a Registered Dietician, specializing in agriculture, sports and her passion for local healthy food.

In its first year, Mansure was able to garner participation from quite a few organizations in the community, who also shared her passion for healthy food and local agriculture. That year, GMP was only a week long, running from April 27 – May 4, 2014, leading up to the official opening day of the Farmer's Market. Even though the week was short and the Greening My Plate series very new, the organizations that participated were dedicated. The list of partner organizations is as follows: North Carolina Cooperative Extension, High Country Local First, Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture, Watauga

¹ Appendix E – Interview with Mansure

County Farmer's Market, Appalachian District Health Department, Pharmin, Sustain Appalachian, Lettuce Learn project, Appalachian Regional Library, Appalachian Student Dietetic Association, Village Vision, Hospitality House, Sustainability & Environmental Education Club, Children's Playhouse, F.A.R.M. Café, WIC, Hunger and Health Coalition, Blowing Rock Art & History Museum (BRAHM), Western Watauga Community Center, and the Blowing Rock Farmer's Market.

According to the event webpage, Greening My Plate is a “coalition of nonprofits and individuals dedicated to improving the economic and personal health of [the] community by encouraging the consumption of fresh, locally produced food” (Greening My Plate, 2015). The promotional tagline of the event that is in most of GMP's marketing materials is

“Promoting Healthy Eating Habits and Celebrating Local Foods.”²

Research & Issue

National. As evidenced by the 21 partner organizations that agreed to put on Greening My Plate (GMP), issues dealing with local food, agriculture and health are prominent in this area of North Carolina in addition to increasingly gaining attention on the national level. According to a 2010 study conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture, “local food markets account for a small but growing share of total U.S. agricultural sales” (Martinez, Hand, Da Pra, Pollack, Ralston, Smith, Vogel, Clark, Lohr, Low & Newman, 2010, p.iii). In fact, the number of U.S. farmers' markets increased by 3,519 from 1994 to 2009 and has been increasing ever since (Martinez, Hand, Da Pra,

² Copies of major promotional materials can be found in Appendix A

Pollack, Ralston, Smith, Vogel, Clark, Lohr, Low & Newman, 2010, p.iii). Similarly, the number of community-supported agriculture organizations (CSAs) within the U.S. more than doubled within a four-year period, according to a study done by the National Center for Appropriate Technology (Martinez, Hand, Da Pra, Pollack, Ralston, Smith, Vogel, Clark, Lohr, Low & Newman, 2010, p.iii).

Many of the farms within these statistics, and that are present in the High Country region, are smaller farms with “heterogenous products and short supply chains in which farmers also perform [their own] marketing functions, including storage, packaging, transportation, distribution, and advertising” ((Martinez, Hand, Da Pra, Pollack, Ralston, Smith, Vogel, Clark, Lohr, Low & Newman, iv). According to the 2007 U.S. Census of Agriculture, smaller scale farms, also known as direct-to-consumer sale farms or those that sell less than \$50,000 worth of food/products, were responsible for more overall sales than medium-sized farms.

While the concept of the small farms and local produce is a highly romanticized one, it does not come without its struggles and setbacks; there are indeed barriers to successfully entering the local food market. For example, there are a significant “lack of distribution systems into mainstream markets, limited research, education and training for marketing local food” (Martinez, Hand, Da Pra, Pollack, Ralston, Smith, Vogel, Clark, Lohr, Low & Newman, 2010, p.iv). Additionally, there are rarely considered regulations and safety requirements involved in producing and selling local food and, if they are known, they are rarely understood” (Martinez, Hand, Da Pra, Pollack, Ralston, Smith, Vogel, Clark, Lohr, Low & Newman, 2010, p.iv).

Despite these roadblocks, many small farms have been able to maintain their business because those “consumers who value high-quality foods produced with low environmental impact are willing to pay more for locally produced food” (Martinez, Hand, Da Pra, Pollack, Ralston, Smith, Vogel, Clark, Lohr, Low & Newman, iv). Because of the growth of the local food movement overall, governments at the local, state, and federal levels are responding with increased support of local food systems both in finance and programming. Examples of this can be referenced in initiatives like the WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) programs, Specialty Crop Block Grant Program, Community Facilities Program, etc. (Martinez, Hand, Da Pra, Pollack, Ralston, Smith, Vogel, Clark, Lohr, Low & Newman, 2010, p.v).

State. North Carolina has a prominent history in the world of agriculture. The image in Appendix D shows the high concentration of CSAs in the state, which indicates a large collection of small-scale agriculture as well. According to the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services, the state has around 52,000 farmers who are responsible for the \$78 billion that North Carolina’s agriculture industry contributes to the state’s economy (NCDACS, “North Carolina Agriculture Overview”, 2012).

Local. Within the High Country community, the small-scale farm phenomenon is also pronounced. There are countless numbers of homesteads³ and small and organic farms that are run by various entities, from nonprofit organizations to individuals. There are approximately 609 farms in Watauga County, which is 1.2% of North Carolina farms (2012 Census of Agriculture, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project [ASAP], 2014). Of these 609 farms, 10% work with direct sales. In that same 2012 census, the number of farmers' markets in the area was given in a fraction: .76/1,000 population members for a total of four markets within the county (ASAP, 2014).

One of these markets, the Watauga County Farmers' Market, is present on the committee for Greening My Plate. Since its foundation in 1974, it has grown to 50 community farm partners (T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015).

Moving past the statistics on local food sources and the prominence of agriculture in Watauga County, food insecurity⁴ also serves as a central motivation for the organizational actors behind and within Greening My Plate.

In its study, ASAP also discovered that a significant portion of the local population, 68% in fact, does not consume or have access to adequate fruits and vegetables for their diets ((2012 Census of Agriculture, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project [ASAP]). In addition to this pervasive nutritional deficiency in the local population, there is also a deficiency of food in general. The food insecurity rate in Watauga County sits at 19% of the total population, with 28.8% of the population at or

³ homestead definition: the home and adjoining land occupied by a family; a house and the farmland it is on

⁴ food insecurity: the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food

below the poverty level and 7% of families receiving federal funding through SNAP⁵ programming.

Objectives

For the organizations involved in Greening My Plate (GMP), each of the aforementioned facts and statistics has played a role in motivating collaboration. Whereas in its founding year Greening My Plate was mainly focused on local food and nutrition education, in its second year (2015), that focus has broadened. As Margie Mansure put it, “we wanted to reach the disenfranchised with our messages...partnering with local and relevant nonprofits such as Hospitality House and Hunger and Health Coalition” (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). In other words, the GMP coalition has exhibited an overall desire to increase knowledge on local food options in Watauga County residents’ diets, but more specifically those residents in lower-income levels who have a lack of access to proper nutrition.

Programming

Given the Greening my Plate (GMP) event history and the motivation behind it, it is possible to begin a comparison between it and the organizational theories discussed in the Literature Review. In order to optimize comprehension, the coalition behind GMP will be analyzed first followed by an evaluation of the organization of the events themselves.

⁵ SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as the Food Stamp program), which provides food-purchasing assistance to low and no income people living in the U.S.

Coalition. As stated earlier, 21 organizations are involved with Greening My Plate. These actors can also be broken down into more specific groupings: nonprofit organizations, community-based organizations, government-based organizations and on-campus clubs/groups.

Foundation. In November of 2013, Margie Mansure imagined the idea for Greening My Plate in the hopes of “trying to get people to think about what they eat and where they buy their food” (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). As stated earlier, Mansure is an Extension Agent in the Family and Consumer Sciences unit of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, whose mission statement reads,

The North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service partners with communities to deliver education and technology that enrich the lives, land and economy of North Carolinians (NC Cooperative Extension).

In the wake her brainchild, Mansure recognized that garnering support in organizations in the area was her next step. Finding community support was a success due to the High Country’s pervasive zeal for local food, which was a powerful “common denominator” in the advancement and success of Greening My Plate (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). Over the course of her work as an Extension Agent, Mansure had grown to have numerous and strong relationships with local agriculture, food, and nutrition-based organizations. Because of this, the search for interested actors was forthright.

Meaning-Making. Brainstorming characterized the beginning phases of the creation of Greening My Plate. Each of the organizations and individuals that Mansure was able to bring together for GMP began their collaboration by discerning what the goals of these events were going to be and how they would be organized. A key part of this specific phase was the discovery and framing of Greening My Plate's purpose. According to Chloe Paddison, an intern for Margie Mansure at the Agricultural Extension Center and former president of the Appalachian Student Dietetic Association, that particular group framing process led to the purpose of "educating people and making them more aware of local food" (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015)⁶. In meaning-making, discerning a shared, as well as united, objective serves a vital role. For Greening My Plate, there is indeed a shared objective, but, on an equally as important level, each participating organization works with different populations and has its own organizational mission or agenda. Paddison personally found this "a fascinating thing...to see people collaborate for the same objective with different resources" (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015). There is no surprise, however, for Paddison, who also cites Watauga County and the High Country as a "very progressive community [with] a high level of knowledge, motivation and activity within our local food system" (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015).

Tori Culler, the Manager of the Watauga County Farmers' Market, phrased her view of GMP's purpose as "to create excitement, education and opportunities around local food and healthy eating" (T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015). She added that Greening My Plate was designed to bring these "people who are all working

⁶ Appendix G – Interview with Paddison

on those things together on a central event that touches on multiple aspects” of that local food movement (T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Additionally, in Culler understanding of GMP’s purpose, she explained that the coordinated events were designed to focus on one central issue for optimized impact rather than just on multiple fringe issues (T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015). The act of discovering a communal purpose is extremely important as it determines how these organizations, each with their own mission, can coordinate as one unit.

Another facet in the process of meaning-making is seeking a definition of what “success” is for the event(s) and the coalition. Culler described such success in two ways: short-term and long-term. Attendance at meetings and events is a short-term goal whereas “stronger local food and health knowledge in [the] area and seeing those target audiences incorporate some of our beliefs about nutrition” into their shopping and eating routines is a long-term goal (T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Paddison’s view of success was similar, for she believed it was “having people become more familiar with the community’s resources” and increasing education (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015).

Organization. Once united objectives are created, the next step is creating a structure for the organization itself. Creating a structure for coalitions who seek to collaborate is equally as impactful as the act of meaning-making and agenda-setting that precedes it

For any collaborating network, its most influential facet is its formal centralized coordinating unit or specific form of governance. According to Paddison and Culler, that

unit is Margie Mansure and the Agricultural Extension Center. Not only is Mansure referenced as “the main person who got the group together” but the Agricultural Extension is also the major coordinating force behind Greening My Plate (GMP) (T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Mansure also referenced herself as the “mediator or facilitator” for Greening My Plate (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). As the facilitator, Mansure is responsible for tasks such as creating agendas for meetings, delegating different responsibilities and making sure those responsibilities are completed.

The role of the Agricultural Extension as a whole becomes one of maintaining the “big picture versus individualized things” (T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Additionally, the Extension Office serves as a location for all of the GMP coordinating meetings as well as multiple actual GMP events.

Each individual organization involved is responsible for “organiz[ing] its own events and then com[ing] together to do promotion and outreach” (T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015). “Where crossover occurs, forces are combined” (T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015). The specific positioning of these organizations within the coalition, however, is fluid; it is determined based on the actors’ niche resources and willingness to offer up those resources, as well as the specific tasks that those resources enable them to undertake other than the creation of their own unique events. According to Paddison, the structure of GMP is very much a “contribute what you can” style (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015). Similarly, Mansure believes that for GMP, “if you step up to the plate, then you’re the leader,” allowing each

organization to volunteer for what they can (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015).

This structural style has led to three of four individual actors holding a more pervasive presence within the GMP coalition. For example, due to its expertise in graphic design, High Country Local First is known as the coordinating unit for all of GMP's marketing materials. Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture's access to government-subsidized printing and web-design expertise similarly dubbed them as the promotions unit of GMP. Additionally, the financial prowess of the Health Department and its ability to receive grant funding set them apart from the rest of the coalition.

Because the value of each participating organization is determined based on these resources High Country Local First, BRWIA, the Health Department, and the Agricultural Extension are, in a sense, of higher value than the other organizations. However, it is important to note that without the other coalition's organizations, the overall success of Greening My Plate would never be possible, especially because of the separate reach and audience of each involved organization.

The assessment of GMP's structure from various internal perspectives of active GMP organizational members is positive. Comprehensively it is described specifically as "organic," "informal," and "intentional" (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015; M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015; T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015).

Conflict Management. Another important component of any coalition is its ability to both recognize and manage conflicts if and when they arise. Greening My Plate

(GMP), however, there has not had any truly debilitating conflict (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015; M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015; T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015). Paddison cites the reasoning for this as the group understanding that “if you put in this amount, this is what the benefit is” (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015). Phrased another way, anticipation of individualized organizational benefit plays a role in regulating and reducing conflict. Paddison also emphasizes that no one within the coalition “has ever felt ignored, covered up or under appreciated” (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015). Additionally, the preexisting cohesion of the group—the fact that many in the group are “friends and connect in professional circles already”—plays a key factor in this accord (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015).

Despite the lack of conflict, if one were to arise, Mansure asserts that it would be handled primarily by her, as a mediator, bringing the affected or conflicting actors together to “talk about what the issues might be” and how best to compromise upon them (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). She also believes that to delegate projects with deadlines to the coalition members so that they have a specific role helps with both preventing and managing any conflicts of laziness or social loafing⁷ (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015).

Development. In 2014—Greening My Plate’s (GMP) inaugural year—the coalition members decided that the events would run for one week, leading up to the opening day of the Watauga County Farmers’ Market. As stated earlier, the shared goal

⁷ social loafing definition: social psychology phenomenon of people exerting less effort to achieve a goal when they work in a group than when they work alone

of this week of events was to increase knowledge of local food and nutrition within the surrounding High Country community. Although no official mechanisms were in place to measure the success of GMP in 2014, the attendance level at each event did serve as a testament to the health, food, and agricultural education that would take place as a result of the week (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015).

Once the first Greening My Plate series was over, the coalition disbanded but not before it met for an evaluation and analysis of the week's events. Much like the foundational meetings of GMP, this round-table meeting style allowed each participating organization to review the week's events, what was done well, and what could be done better (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). According to Paddison, a Google Document was also utilized as a mechanism for recording these opinions and sharing them with all coalition members (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015). Despite the coalitions disbanding, the organizations, now more connected and aware of one another's resources, have continued to work together throughout the year in a variety of ways.

In late February/early March of 2015, it was time for the Greening my Plate committee to reconvene to plan the next series. Recruiting was simplified in this second year because every organization from the inaugural year was kept in contact and able to participate once again (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). At the start of this second planning period, there was another meeting dedicated to evaluating the previous GMP. The meeting was effective and utilized as a foundation to build upon with new ideas (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015).

In planning for its second Greening My Plate, the coalition emphasized growing in the number of events and coalition members. According to Mansure, because of 2014's success and the renewal of 100% of 2014's GMP members, more of an emphasis could be placed on attracting a larger audience in both planning and execution stages (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). For 2015, there is a "broadened focus" to include not only general food education but to expand that education to more counties and their diverse populations (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015). For both Paddison and Mansure, expanding the year's programs to include "underprivileged populations or lower socio-economic classes" and collaborating more with nonprofits that work with those populations was of the utmost importance (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015).

Another significant expansion from GMP's first to second year is the length of the series itself. While it was just one week in 2014, the coalition agreed to extend Greening My Plate to one whole month to include more events and accommodate growing interest.

Events. Prior to analyzing how the Greening My Plate coalition leverages its resources and actors, knowledge of the actual GMP events will serve as a deeper insight into how the goals and objectives of the coalition were manifested within the community.

During the 2014 GMP inaugural week, the following events occurred but were not limited to:

- Season Cocktail Workshop – CoBo Sushi Bistro & Bar hosted an interactive workshop about making cocktails with local ingredients.

- Farm to School High School Project – Mountain Alliance Group students volunteered at Against the Grain farm through a collaboration between Mountain Alliance, Earth Fare and the North Carolina Cooperative Extension.
- Seed Planting at the Regional Library – A book reading and seed planting for children at the Appalachian Regional Library.

In 2015, the events extend over the month of April to effectively include all the programs that the constituent organizations wanted to host. Some of the most collaborative events of 2015 include:

- Cooking Workshop Series: Kale & Apple Salad – The Hospitality House of Boone and Western Watauga Community Center put on a cooking class as a part of the Western Watauga Food Outreach Project.
- Springtime in Appalachia: Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture, Lettuce Learn, Blowing Rock Farmers' Market and the Blowing Rock Art & History Museum come together to host fun agricultural activities for children in the community to learn more about planting and springtime.
- Terra Firm Documentary Screening and Spring Farm Work Day – The newest Appalachian & the Community Together (A.C.T.) committee called Farmers Of The Round Table (F.O.R.T.), Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture and the Appalachian Women's Center host two events that focus on women and veteran farmers in the nation and in our community.
- Solar Green Pizzas in a Learning Garden – The Appalachian Student Dietetic Association, Sustainability & Environmental Education Club and the Lettuce

Learn Project meet at the Appalachian State Child Development Center's Learning Garden to teach how to create a solar oven and bake a pizza with fresh springtime greens.

- EarthTones Sustainability Festival – The Appalachian Sustainable Energy Society (Solar Club), Sustain Appalachian and the ASU Renewable Energy Initiative put on a concert in Durham Park with only solar-powered music.

Each of the events in 2014 and for 2015 is dependent on the skills, resources, and passion-driven missions of the organizations involved in Greening My Plate. Whether the events were hosted by just one organization or were an amalgamation of multiple actors in GMP, they stand as a testimony to the influence and power that many small community-focused events can have when they interact on a grander scale.

Evaluation

Given this brief history of the Greening My Plate (GMP) coalition and the series of events that stem from it, the networking and collaboration theories discussed in the Literature Review can be applied to better evaluate why GMP is a powerful collaboration that should be emulated in other cities and sectors.

Organizational Theory

A primary evaluation of Greening My Plate (GMP) is whether or not it can be defined as a network at all. According to Saz-Carranza (1976), networks are an “interdependent set of independent organizations that require centralized coordination of necessarily autonomous organizations” (p.45). Such networks are characterized as flat systems, which are heavily based on the concepts of loyalty and cooperation, reciprocity, negotiation, and specific conflict resolution mechanisms. How these factors are demonstrated within GMP will be discussed below.

Greening My Plate Description. The Greening My Plate coalition exhibits a distinct emphasis on the “flat” nature of the network by multiple members within the group (C. Paddison, M. Mansure, T. Culler, personal communication, March 30, 2015). Additionally, in GMP meetings, the process of negotiation was evident in the way that each organization chose to address the group, with a significant amount of give-and-take. Loyalty is also a manifested concept within the GMP as evidenced by the 100% return rate of organizations between the first and second years. Most importantly, an absolute central coordinating organization or individual exists within GMP: Agricultural Extension Center and Margie Mansure. Lastly, there is the point of the conflict resolution

mechanisms. In literature, this terminology is loosely defined leaving much room for interpretation. Nevertheless, when coalition members were asked if these “mechanisms” existed within Greening My Plate, most believed that the term “mechanisms” was not apt. They believed that conflict, if it were to arise, would be handled by Mansure who asserted that she would simply bring the opposing groups together, sit them down and talk it out (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). Whether that can be considered a mechanism is unclear, but it appears Mansure does have an idea of how she would approach and resolve conflict as evidenced by her proclivity towards “talking it out.”

Theory Evaluation. In the literature, market theory is described as network collaboration based on necessity (Saz-Carranza, 1976). From the information gathered on Greening my Plate’s organization, there is no evidence that the collaboration was or is based on a sense of necessity. Hierarchy theory, however, could be applied to the coalition’s network model because of the existence of centralized coordination. Despite this, Mansure and Paddison both strongly asserted that there were little-to-no superior-subordinate relationships between coalition members. The only organization that would appear “superior” would be the North Carolina Agricultural Extension Center because of its coordinating role; however, coalition members clearly defined the Agricultural Extension as more of a facilitator than a direct leader of GMP (C. Paddison, M. Mansure, T. Culler, personal communication, March 30, 2015).

It is appropriate, therefore, to conclude that the Greening My Plate coalition is most closely defined as a network, despite the hints of a hierarchal model that exist within it. Each of those interviewed for this study believed that GMP fits within Saz-

Carranza's (1976) definition of an interorganizational network: "a long-term cooperative relationship among organizations in which each entity retains control over its own resources but jointly decides with others on their collective use" (p.2; C. Paddison, M. Mansure, T. Culler, personal communication, March 30, 2015).

Spectrum. According to Saz-Carranza (1976), networks lie on a spectrum based on their specific style of collaboration (p.6). The three styles are informational, action-based and goal-directed, each named for the primary element collaborating members exchange.

For the GMP coalition, there is absolutely an exchange of information between acting members. The collaboration, however, does not stop with simply sharing organization-specific information; it continues to include the exchange of resources and advice and extends to the act of sharing a brand, which is a key characteristic of action-based networks. In this case, that shared brand is the Greening My Plate event series designation. Also congruent with the action-based style, is a formal centralized coordinating unit or network administrative organization (NAO) whose role is to direct and moderate the network (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.6).

In the third network classification, the goal-directed network, the key distinction between the action network and the goal-directed network is the latter's focus on a solid form of governance. Network governance is the study of "how networks are controlled and organized" in a manner different from market and hierarchal styles of governance (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 7). Goal-directed networks also focus on a "preconceived shared objective" that motivates and informs collaboration (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p. 6). Greening

My Plate exhibits a tentative form of governance in that Mansure serves as a facilitator in a manner not congruent with market or hierarchy style. Therefore, it is fair to characterize GMP as goal-directed network. However, because the coalition is only officially one-year-old, the strength of its network governance is not yet known. Overtime, the placement of the Greening My Plate coalition on this network spectrum will become more clear and pronounced.

Structure. Four types of organizational structures can be applied to the GMP coalition: operational, deep, relational and organic vertical. These structural archetypes range from formal to organic and multi-faceted. Through first-hand observation of Greening My Plate meetings and interviews, I found no defined formal structure imposed; rather the coalition appears to be an organic and naturally organization (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). Therefore, GMP is not yet characterized with an operational structure. However, GMP does exhibit the informal norms that are characteristic of deep structure networks; i.e., it lacks formalized norms. Yet, the coalition appears to be deeply relational. In fact, before the creation of GMP, each of the organizations within the coalition were both aware of and active with one another in various capacities (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015). Despite those interactions, constituent organizations lack a focus on the “intricacies that bind” each of them together in favor of a focus on the “big picture” goal(s) of the coalition (Saz-Carranza, 1976).

Organic vertical structure is most readily identified by its emphasis on natural relationships and governance and its diverse range of member positions. According to

Saz-Carranza (1976), that range of positions includes but is not limited to executive directors, project coordinators, community members and other key staff members. The fact that community members are considered active participants within the organic vertical structure is the main characteristic in determining Greening My Plate's own structure.

Whereas operational, deep, and relational structures include only individuals already established within the organizations at play in a network, organic vertical structures allow for interested members of the local community to become active players in the organization. For Greening My Plate, this is evidenced in how Mansure was quick to emphasize that, despite the already-established intimacy between most of GMP's organizations, they "welcome new people that want to get involved," no matter their standing, student or professional, experienced or novice (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). Because of this type of natural, open structure, Greening My Plate most closely exhibits the organic vertical style.

Paradigms. Diving further into the concept of network governance, five main models can be applied to an existent collaboration. These are Rational Choice Institutionalism, Normative Institutionalism, Interpretative Governance Theory, Network Management Theory, and, lastly, Governmentality Theory (Torfing, 2013).

Within Greening My Plate, no traces of incentives as tools for motivation exist, therefore Rational Choice Institutionalism is not an applicable theory. The organizations within GMP are motivated by the intrinsic value of the local food cause, agriculture, and building awareness of their individual organizations within the community. Additionally,

Normative Institutionalism does not describe GMP because this paradigm adheres to “institutional roles and cultural norms,” which are not present within the GMP coalition (Torfing, 2013, p.311). Normative Institutionalism does not address the “active role of the individual to create new interpretations of the world,” which characterizes the entire GMP series (Torfing, 2013, p.311).

The Interpretative Governance Theory of networks strongly emphasizes a bottom-up movement of ideas (Torfing, 2013). For Greening My Plate, this emphasis can be seen in the way community members can contribute ideas and events to the series as a whole. This theory also asserts that any problems that arise are “urgent, manageable...with feasible and desirable” solutions, which is similar to how Mansure described her own view of conflict management (Torfing, 2013, p.312; M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). The power of narrative in motivating adherence and collaboration is also a principle component of Interpretative Governance Theory and a mobilizing agent of the GMP coalition.

Network Management Theory is grounded mainly in “complex policy interactions” and is characterizes networks by an emphasis on conflict (Torfing, 2013, p.312). While a “mutual resource dependency” occurs within the GMP coalition, especially where access to graphic design, logo design and printing is concerned, apparent conflicts or complex policies are not at work (Torfing, 2013, p.312; cite interviews). This lack of conflict argues against the application of Network Management Thoery to Greening My Plate.

The final theory considered, Governmentality Theory, parallels the Interpretative Governance Theory and appears applicable to the Greening My Plate collaboration.

Governmentality Theory is marked not only by an organization's members' mutual use of resources but also by the organization's ability to use those combined resources to "shape the institutional conditions of individuals" and promote collective action as a whole (Torfing, 2013, p.313). Greening My Plate's awareness of collective action and the agenda-setting power of its network is what makes Governmentality Theory applicable to the GMP coalition. The group was convened by Mansure under the premise of collective action in order to shape community perceptions of local food and healthy eating through a "macro-level initiative...[stemming from] micro-level debate" (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015; Torfing, 2013, p.313). The source of power in the Governmentality Theory is emphasized as being decentralized, which is similar to the hands-off, facilitating role of Mansure and the Agricultural Extension Center (Torfing, 2013).

Both the Interpretative Governance Theory and the Governmentality Theory provide the best theoretical methods for the Greening My Plate coalition because these two theories emphasize the initiative of individual community members, organizational agency, and collective action. The main distinction, however, between the two theories is Interpretative Governance Theory's emphasis on the power of the individual versus Governmentality Theory's emphasis on the power of the network as a whole. A unique balancing of these two theories is existent within Greening My Plate due to its emphasis on the enterprise of the organizations within the coalition as well as the pursuance of a united objective. Because of this dichotomy, applying that specific facet of the theory to GMP is difficult.

Paradoxes. The largest, most important dichotomy, however, within any network is the interplay of unity and diversity. The premise of this tension is that when a balance is reached between the poles, the “network’s overall power is increased...allowing it to advocate and engage with external actors to promote its mission” (Saz-Carranza, 1976, 12).

For the Greening My Plate coalition, this dichotomy is critical to its success so far. Paradoxes have the power to be the competitive advantage or the downfall of any network. In the case of GMP, the unique resources of each organization are imperative for the success of the events. For example, Ms. Tori Culler, the Manager of the Farmers’ Market, has connections that extend throughout the entire farming community in the High Country (T. Culler, personal communication, March 26, 2015)⁸. She has experience corralling farmers to work together and managing various events focused around local food; this experience is her unique asset to the Greening My Plate group.

Both Torfing (2013) and Saz-Carranza (1976) note that when the unity-diversity paradox is active within a collaborative environment, those diverse capabilities and skills can present certain challenges to the group. Continuing with the example of Culler and the Watauga County Farmers’ Market, because she is so busy working with farmers and accustomed to doing so, Culler could lack understanding of what it’s like to collaborate with a more formalized organization within the coalition, such as the Health Department. This is not a known fact about GMP but rather is meant to serve as an illustration.

⁸ Appendix F – Interview with Culler

According to Saz-Carranza (1976), successful organizations are those that “strive for diversity to enhance creativity, but simultaneously promote similarity to enhance productivity” (p.39). As the facilitating head of Greening My Plate, Mansure is charged with the task of managing this sort of unique dichotomy. She must capitalize on each participating individual and organizational asset while also pursuing and maintaining the “sense of collective networkedness” that is deemed vital for organizational success (Hunan & Provan, 2000, p.49). For Mansure, specifically, this translates to encouraging each organization to step into some role of leadership for a specific event or promotional need while also making sure that the goal of educating the community about local, healthy food is the first priority and one met throughout the event.

An important component of diversity in this active complex is the “knowledge base” that diversity provides for networks such as Greening My Plate. Such diversity serves to enrich the acts carried out by that network and expand their influence (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.58). According Saz-Carranza (1976), the diversity of a network provides “different ways of seeing the situation, giv[ing] more resources for strategy...[and] many ways for understanding the same thing” (p. 59). This leads to a richer and more complex analysis.

For example, the Appalachian Student Dietetic Association is an extremely important actor in the Greening My Plate Coalition. It provides a relationship with students and the Appalachian State campus that would have been absent otherwise, as well as a specialized knowledge in health and dietary basics. Paddison, the former president of the ASDA, claimed that the ASDA was brought into the coalition for a specific purpose (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015). She framed

her and her group's assets to GMP as "extra man power...healthy eating knowledge, coordinating volunteers, and networking in the community" (C. Paddison, personal communication, March 30, 2015).

Although there is genuine potential within the paradoxical tension of unity and diversity, there is also a greater likelihood of conflict, also known as "collaborative inertia" (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.2). "Collaborative inertia" is the result of complexity within the network that is not curbed by the necessary collective and shared goals of the coalition. An illustration of this would be when a new individual showed up unexpectedly at one of the weekly Greening My Plate meetings with the goal of starting a new event for the month. Whereas this normally would be positive due to the focus on the individual initiative of community members that characterizes GMP using Interpretative Governance Theory, this was not the case. The woman attended her first meeting just two weeks before the start of the Greening My Plate series. A psychologist whose focus was on researching soil types in Netherlands, she was not so much seeking collaboration with the GMP organizational members as much as seeking assistance with screening community members about the issues she was researching. As Margie put it, "you cannot just wait until the last minute [despite] her passion about her subject" (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). Although the GMP network is defined by Mansure as a flat one, rooted in its acceptance of any community member ideas, without proper understanding of the coalition's collective purpose, those community member ideas will fail to succeed.

Collaborative Leadership & Collective Action. Network governance is a type of leadership and organizational ecology defined as one that is “good at addressing problems, especially in the nonprofit sector” (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.3). With this knowledge, the more efficient the Greening My Plate coalition is at network governance, the more collaboration can take place, the less conflict will occur, and, ultimately, the more successful the GMP events will be.

As analyzed earlier, network governance is directly related to the strength of its “NAO or network administrative organization, [which is] a separate entity set up specifically to govern the network and its activities” (Provan & Kenis, 2008, p.236). For Greening My Plate, this NAO is the N.C. Agricultural Extension and its leading facilitator is Margie Mansure.

Governance networks, or networks that have this specific form of governance, can be formed either through self-development or initiated at higher organizational levels, rigid or informal, short-term or permanent, specific or general (Sorensen & Torfing, 2005). In the case of Greening My Plate, the coalition was intentionally initiated by N.C. Agricultural Extension and Mansure, but it is defined by Mansure as “organic and informal” in its organization (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015).

Similarly, leadership within the Greening My Plate network is informal yet strong. This is because of Mansure’s expertise as a registered dietician, her passion for local food, and her extensive connections throughout the local community (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). Her reputation in the High Country brought a variety of organizations to the table and her passion kept them there. Her focus on

strength in agenda-setting also helped the coalition stay focused. Ultimately, she can be defined as an “organic leader” (Torfing, 2013, p.308).

Additionally, governance networks allow for the “establishment of a frame of reference for consensus building or at least dealing with conflicts between stakeholders...[and are] important for coalescing information, knowledge and evaluations” (Montenegro & Bulgacov, 2014, p.111). As lead facilitator, Mansure knew from previous experience that having a set deadline for organizations to complete their assigned tasks was a recognized way to curb conflict and promote efficiency (M. Mansure, personal communication, March 31, 2015). The act of consensus building is also an established mechanism with the Greening My Plate coalition, as illustrated by the network’s initial brainstorming and evaluative meetings. Additionally, in her concentration on creating a flat network environment Mansure was able to reduce the possibility of “substantial power differences among participants that can inhibit formation of collaborative relationships” (Wijen & Ansari, 2006, p.6).

Each of these factors plays a vital role in the achievement of collective action. Because of Mansure’s prowess at motivating others and providing “common meanings and identities,” she exhibits the skill of “leveraging” that Wijen and Ansari (2006) declare is a key facet of collective action (p.4). The final facet of collective action is where the “locus of relationship” resides (Sorenson & Rogan, 2014, p.263). The locus can either reside in Interests, where the emphasis is on gaining more through collaboration, in Exchange, where there is a sense of being in debt to a counterpart, or in Affection, where the emphasis is on some sort of emotional attachment. For Greening My

Plate, the locus was not in any sense based on a scarcity of resources and nor was it based solely on affection (C. Paddison, M. Mansure, T. Culler, personal communication, March 31, 2015). It was, in fact, an amalgamation of the three loci that combined in a way that was rooted in trust and a shared value of local food education within their mutual community.

Final Recommendations

In modern network theory, there is a clear movement away from the rudimentary and standard structure of groups seeking to collaborate (Torfing, 2013). Instead, modern network theory focuses on how each collaboration is organized on a case-by-case basis. However, there is a need to turn “innovation into a permanent and systematic activity” in order to promote sustainable collaboration (Torfing, 2013, p.301).

For the Greening My Plate (GMP) coalition to achieve a successful sustainable collaboration, thinking and acting more creatively is essential. For example, while continuing to host programs such as cooking classes, gardening classes, and other events, the GMP group can increase engagement in those events in a variety of ways. The group can organize events earlier in the year so that there is more time to promote the events and maximize exposure and awareness within the community. The GMP coalition can put more of an emphasis on collaborating with on-campus organizations as well, especially ones that are closely connected to faculty in relevant academic departments and programs i.e. the Goodnight Family Sustainable Development Department, which includes Agroecology concentrations, the Environmental Science Program, the Department of Nutrition and Health Care Management, the Health Promotions Program,

etc. The university has a multitude of connections on and off campus that could lead to a higher level of participation in GMP events overall, and also in the actual GMP planning coalition.

Additionally, in any type of network, transparency is essential not only for success in an isolated event but also for sustainable engagement from the audience or community. In the case of Greening My Plate, transparency could be established in a few ways. The coalition could focus on increasing its presence in the local media, especially using news sources with the highest number of impressions in the High Country community. The Greening My Plate coalition could also earn media coverage by distributing news releases after each GMP event. These new releases could provide research that describes how the events hosted that month had a positive effect on the community.

As this study has asserted, framing is important to creating a successful network, especially where the act of “meaning-making and identity-forming” is concerned (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.75). This framing would be manifest in describing the impact the Greening My Plate series has on the local community. According to individual members of the coalition, the definition of success is “stronger local food and health knowledge in our area” and “to see those target audiences incorporate some of our beliefs about nutrition...to see people shop and eat differently” (Cite Tori Interview). Because this definition of success is shared among all organizations within the GMP coalition, each post-series news release would need to reinforce each of those points for the public. The broadness and generality of these goals, however, could cause difficulties in proving that the events had direct effects on the Boone community. To maximize the impact and

understanding of the value of Greening My Plate to the community, the coalition should structure its goals under two categories: specific and general. The terms of success that are listed above would fall more closely underneath the general framework while other goals like, for instance, a 15% attendance increase from year to year would fall under the specific framework.

Another key characteristic of any sound public communication campaign is the transformation of publics. According to Grunig's Situational Theory of Publics, the publics of any given organization are defined by the extent to which they are aware of the event, organization or problem at hand and how willing they are to do something about it (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Grunig and Hunt (1984) provide four categories under which an organization's supposed audience will fall: non, latent, aware, and active. For Greening My Plate, this would translate as the following:

- Non-publics: those who are not affected at all by the events or issues of local food in the High Country
- Latent Publics: those who are not aware of Greening My Plate but are definitely affected by the issues it seeks to bring to light
- Aware Publics: those who both know of Greening My Plate and are aware of local food issues
- Active Publics: those individuals who attend GMP events and are active within the local and health food movements

In order to continue to grow the Greening My Plate event series, the coalition must better understand those publics it seeks to engage. An ultimate goal would be to

transform each public into an active one through the aforementioned power of creativity, earned media, applicable and influential research, and transparency.

Lastly, exposing publics repeatedly to a clear and concise message is crucial for successful campaigns. Within network theory, the “concept of access,” indicates that, “you want one clear message from multiple organizations getting out [into the audience] again and again in order to get social change” (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.60). Consequently, in order to exhibit long-term success, the Greening My Plate series must sustain a clear message that buying local food is important and knowledge of health and nutrition is extremely beneficial to both one’s self and the community.

In addition to the abovementioned recommendations, the Greening My Plate coalition can improve its strength as a network and, in doing so, subsequently improve their overall likelihood of success by some other actions. As mentioned in the Literature Review, trust is a crucial ingredient within networks. Trust is crucial because it underpins and supports relationship building, which is a key activity in and between networks. To build this trust, the organizations and individuals that make up the Greening My Plate coalition should “develop [closer] personal and informal relationships that later [will] become formal and role-based” (Perrow, 1986; Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.41). This can occur through “repeated interaction” with one another outside of the GMP planning season, which will result in a deeper sense of affiliation with one another and with Greening My Plate (Sorenson & Rogan, 2014, p.262). Even as a young organizational coalition, Greening My Plate is already engaging in this important relationship building.

Another means by which Greening My Plate can continue to strengthen its network is by more closely defining the specific styles of leadership that should be

utilized. Margie Mansure is clearly a leader in her role as facilitator and mediator so bottom-up regulation and initiatives are common within GMP; however, a more formalized type of leadership is needed, especially where conflict-resolution management is concerned (Torfing, 2013). Since the GMP coalition is described by the Governmentality Theory of networks, a void exists for the “important risk assessment and management [initiatives] that promote willingness of organizations to produce innovative solutions” (Torfing, 2013, p.314). Taking all of this into consideration, the best type of leadership for the Greening My Plate coalition is situational leadership—a type of leadership that observes alternating poles dependent on contextual factors (Saz-Carranza, 1976, p.44).

Because Greening My Plate is focused on a homegrown movement toward healthier eating and spending one’s dollar locally and wisely, it can be defined as an “issue-specific network” (Robbeband & Duyvendak, 2013, p. 96). More and more individuals and organizations within these types of networks that seek to initiate change within a public(s) are leaving “heavy, long-term engagements...for looser” ones (Robbeband & Duyvendak, 2013, p. 96). These issues-specific networks are defined by their flexible structural style and their organic formation and perpetuation, which allows them to be “lighter” and more readily adapt to our constantly transforming definitions of community (Robbeband & Duyvendak, 2013, p. 95). It is important, however, that the Greening My Plate coalition does not let its community become so “light” that it becomes fragmented and lacking in commitment.

Conclusion

As noted in this study, nonprofit collaboration has become progressively more organic and contextual while simultaneously becoming more intentional and specific. Therefore, for Greening My Plate (GMP) to be successful in the long-term, it must be willing to consistently preserve its flexibility in leadership styles, while also being secure in its mission, goals, and structure. Greening My Plate and the coalition behind it are creative and innovative in nature, gathering separate organizational entities together in order to better address the important issue of food education in their community. Their collaboration and the subsequent relationships that have grown because of Greening My Plate have positively impacted the High Country in ways that will surely continue to permeate the lives of GMP's publics. Most importantly, the Greening My Plate coalition demonstrates that there is more strength and positive impact in collaboration, especially when that collaboration is homegrown, organic, and intentional.

This case study also serves as a benchmark for both future research and for use by members of the Greening My Plate coalition.

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Appendix A

Rack Card:



This image is the rack card that was used to promote the month-long series of Greening My Plate as a whole. It was meant to give an overall look at the month including reasons to participate and what kinds of events would be hosted.

Appendix B



This is an example of a promotional poster for the Spring Samper event for the locally-owned and operated restaurants in the area. It was hosted by the Community Care Clinic, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and circulated on Facebook and posted in the Community Care Clinic, and other areas around Boone.

Appendix C

The Women's Center, Blue Ridge Women in Agriculture,
and A.C.T present:

Film Screening and Farm Workday Events!



Terra Firma Film Screening

Wednesday, April 8 - 6:30 PM
IG Greer Auditorium

Terra Firma is not another 'messed up vets' movie. It is a sensitive, intimate look at three women who joined the service in the mid 90's in order to improve their lives, ended up as support soldiers in a battle zone, returned home with PTSD and eventually found healing through farming.

A.C.T Farm Workday

Saturday, April 11 - 8:30 AM - 2 PM
Meet at the duck pond on campus
Lunch Provided on Farms

A fun day on local farms owned and run by women and veterans! From morning until afternoon, we will be dividing out to farms across the High Country in an effort to help out our local heroes and learn more about agriculture and local food. Not to mention the food is ridiculously good.

***Monetary donations will be accepted to support High Country Farm Families

visit www.greeningmyplate.brwia.org



This image was used as a promotional poster for the Terra Firma film screening and Spring Farm Work Day. It was circulated within the community via Facebook and posted in high traffic places downtown and on the Appalachian State University Campus.

Appendix D

Figure 3
Community Supported Agriculture locations, 2009



Source: Local Harvest, 2010. Available at: <http://www.Localharvest.org>. © Local Harvest. Map used with permission from Local Harvest.

This image is a graphic representation of the concentration of Community Supported Agriculture or CSA locations across the nation. For this study, the concentration of CSAs in North Carolina is most significant.

Appendix E

The questions for the Margie Mansure interview with notations taken during it.

Greening My Plate Focused Information**How did Greening My Plate start? (organic and serendipitous or intentional or mix?)**

2013 in the fall, November – local food and healthy eating
lots of brainstorming
Week (April 2014) several people submitted logos

What was the primary motivation for starting the month of events?

“registered dietician 16 ½ years”
trying to get people to think about what they eat and where they buy it
Nutrition 200+ Nutrition majors so why not get them involved?
“passionate about local food as the common denominator”

Successes and challenges of last year?

People came together and attended their events – supportive of ones other than their own
– brought camaraderie

“make so much more impact by joining forces”

We needed a central place to communicate – different postings and different times for the same event

Basecamp! Was formed → everyone can go there for info. Streamlined

Collective Impact.

What is the mission of Greening My Plate?

“Promoting healthy eating habits and celebrating local food”

Who all is a part of it?

Last year, similar people

Library, BRWIA, Dave Walker (representing Assent—farm entrepreneur education) Blue Ridge Seeds of Change (not anymore), Health Dept, Student dietetic, Sustainable

Has it grown to new organizations? Do you want it to?

“happy for others to join → Hospitality House, reach the disenfranchised with our messages, HHC

Plans for future

“doing things throughout the year with other GMP gang members, keep using the logo, can use that and use that idea...to get people familiar with the logo”

Coalition-Focused Information

What organization are you representing? What are the unique resources that you and your organization bring to the collaboration?

N.C. Cooperative Extension –the institution in the counties, supported b A&T and State, have access to meeting facilities (conference center), pay my salary to organize things --- I have connections and know people.

What was the primary motivator in creating this “coalition”? Was it knowledge of the community’s issues with food insecurity?

Main goal is to reach everybody, but great to reach the “food insecure” as well
Really cool to see community gardens coming up...

Is there a shared as well as united objective?

Yes, Each group has their little niche groups but core is the same, and healthy food

As the driving or centralized force behind GMP, what do you feel like is your specific role?

Mediator, Facilitator

Is there some form of governance by a body or one (multiple) of the organizations involved?

Depends on what people volunteer to do. BRWIA – marketing and website. Step up to the plate then you’re the leader. Organic and informal

How are the member organizations of the coalition connected?

They all know each other. “5 or 8 years, a lot of young people are interested in this issue...a lot of them are friends and connect in professional circles already..and welcome new people that want to get involved”

Has there been any difficulty in promoting collaboration? Conflict?

At first everyone came to meetings, but people have dropped off....as long as events are listed. Good with projects just to have a deadline. Have a specific role.

If so, are there conflict resolution mechanisms in place? How did you, as a facilitator handle them?

The best thing about conflict is to get people together...talk about what the issues might be. “stepping on toes happens and people take things differently than what you might mean”

Logo not being put on it. Talking.

Are there any superior-subordinate relationships in the coalition?

Flat Network.

Are any of the relationships in the coalition based on necessity, whether by knowledge or tangible resources?

Creating websites...certain organizations that can do that. Idea that app sustains “well I can print these posters”

Resources offered up...makes that organization special.

Health Dept. 600 dollars for marketing and grant money has to be spent

Do the terms shared brand or integrated operations resonate with you at all?

As a coalition, is there a solid shared definition of the issue in the High Country that you are seeking to eradicate?

Improve food system and this is just a piece of that. Hos House isn't working on food system but they want to have good food available for their clients

As a coalition, is there a solid shared definition of success as far as Greening My Plate goes? For the coalition as a whole? For you?

At the end last year, we came together and that's when we decided to do for a month and evaluated how many people came to some events...more people reached in different counties that we don't normally reach.

Evaluating and improving "quality improvement"

Did you have a personal relationship with anyone in the coalition's organizations before it (and Greening My Plate) was created?

Yes, absolutely! Everyone is welcomed. Definitely thought of specific groups that I wanted to help with this.

Was there research conducted by you, the coalition or any specific body that was utilized to justify the creation of this coalition and Greening My Plate?

Not really no. I know that Heifer project and BR seeds of change, they had done a lot of research in this area. We all know that you have to have the market, then if it gets to big then there is not enough.

Is the coalition/event funded? If so by what or whom?

Health Department – grant money for marketing
People's organizations contribute
HC Local First – Rack cards printed

Would you say that the Greening My Plate month and the corresponding organizing coalition are innovative?

Definition of Innovative: Inherently contingent process that involves the development, adoption and spread of new and creative ideas that challenge conventional wisdom and bring about a qualitative change in the established practices within a specific context (Sorensen and Torfing, 2011) (Page 303)

Pretty innovative. A lot of the time, people have a hard time getting people together to do something big...especially when nonprofits are competing for the same resources

Would you say that this was an interorganizational network if the definition is as follows: A long term cooperative relationship among organizations in which each

entity retains control over its own resources but jointly decides with others on their collective use? (Goal-directed network)

Absolutely.

Appendix F

The questions for the Tori Culler (Greening My Plate coalition member) interview with notations taken during it.

How did you decide to become a part of this committee and/or coalition?

Email from Margie about it. Second year → whole premise about local food and getting people excited about it. “so I thought I have to get involved”

What do you contribute? What are the unique resources that you and your organization bring to the collaboration?

“Being there to bounce ideas off of”
Farmers Market – largest local food event in the area
“people get exposed to ideas the most”
Association with name of Farmer’s Market
Tapping customer base of WFM – central

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being least, how cohesive do you feel this team is?

???

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least, rate your level of affiliation with the group?

Know almost everyone there through the local food community- 9/10
“we’re not strangers”

Is there any level of conflict in this group?

No conflict in group. B/c I am not a part of group work

Can you rate that level on a scale of 1 of 10?

1

Do you find that there are any conflict mechanisms in place? If so, what are they?**How would conflict be dealt with if it were to arise?**

No official mechanisms – interpersonal level – social norms not rules.

What was the primary motivator in creating this “coalition”? Was it knowledge of the community’s issues with food insecurity?

“Margie was the main person that got the group together.” “TO create excitement and engagement opps with local food and healthy eating”

central event that touches on multiple aspects of it – local food, ag, government, health department

Is there a shared as well as united objective?

Absolutely. Promoting healthy eating and local foods.

How would you describe how the coalition is run or managed?

Margie is leader. Keeps everything on track. Each individual group organizes own event and then come together to do promotion and outreach

“where crossover – combine forces”

meetings → opportunities for collaboration appear.

Would you say that there is a “formal centralized coordinating unit” for the coalition?

Margie & Ag. Extension

Is there some form of governance by a body or one (multiple) of the organizations involved?

Ag. Extension. “I don’t know if governance is the right word.” Responsible for bigger picture vs. individualized things.

Would you say that this was an interorganizational network if the definition is as follows: A long term cooperative relationship among organizations in which each entity retains control over its own resources but jointly decides with others on their collective use? (Goal-directed network)

Each group is volunteering what they can – not necessarily a group direction for use of resources. Really small amounts of funding. No real collective resources. “loose organizations in terms”

Are there any superior-subordinate relationships in this coalition?

Appears flat to me.

As a coalition, is there a solid shared definition of the issue in the High Country that you are seeking to eradicate?

Mission – question. Not one specific thing that we are all working on. The “merging of the three issues (food insecurity, local foods, health & nutrition)..taking a broader base and affect all three issues”

As a coalition, is there a solid shared definition of success as far as Greening My Plate goes? For the coalition as a whole?

“Attendance is short term success. Stronger local food, health knowledge in our area—seeing those target audiences incorporate some of our beliefs about nutrition. Seeing people shop and eat differently”

“EBT program at farmers market is a measurement→Electronic benefits transfer, food stamps (SNAP)” 2,000 for EBT last year “I would like to see it be 10x that”
A big reason why this coalition is a good idea “I would like to see culture of Boone be more like Asheville.” “place a high value on local food and nutritionally even though they don’t have the means”

GMP can effect that change in community through education and enthusiasm” I would love to see more people spend their money a the farmers market

Did you have a personal relationship with anyone in the coalition’s organizations before it (and Greening My Plate) was created?

Professional Relationships with all of them.

Was there research conducted by you, the coalition or any specific body that was utilized to justify the creation of this coalition and Greening My Plate?

EBT.

Is the coalition/event funded? If so by what or whom?

Have received a small grant last year. Didn’t this year. Not structural funding but for a film.

Appendix G

The questions for the Chloe Paddison (Greening My Plate coalition member) interview with notations taken during it.

How did you decide to become a part of this committee and/or coalition?

Brought on board through Dietetic Association on campus → got involved through that.
Coordinating events

Biggest outreach event

From event to coordinating as a whole - Intern for Margie

Dave Walker – smaller scale, Just a week last year (all piled into one week)

Finding more events for ASDA to be involved with

Same events plus more

What do you contribute? What are the unique resources that you and your organization bring to the collaboration?

Direct Role: planning committee and promotional deal; facilitate meetings and get them planned, brainstorming process on ag. Extension thing

Brought ideas and resources to the table to host certain events

In charge of 4 events: leading and teaching, Cooking Demo, 2 seasonal cooking classes at extension office,

Offering help with coordination and extra man power via ASDA resources

Resources: have a lot of people available to me who want to help with things like that; “need extra volunteers” networking in community – getting people involved; event planning experiences involved; awesome cook; worked with every single organization that is with the committee to some extent -- intense networking

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being least, how cohesive do you feel this team is?

8 – pretty high; how small our community is to begin with – everything is noticed, because people are stepping on each other’s toes in the beginning; GMP committee → “that’s great...let us help you with that”

really jumped on board with collaboration and seized the opportunities
 “me me me versus we we we”
 ideas based on the table based on where you come from and see how we mesh

On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least, rate your level of affiliation with the group?

9/10

Is there any level of conflict in this group?

Nothing I have picked up on – but there are 2 things: when people are referred to join the group and wanted to be a part of it but didn’t do their research (not exactly a good fit) when we are already so progressed
 Idea of collaboration and we all recognize that it is more efficient and beneficial (so inclined to help our community), some people are very cautious and careful (don’t want to use up all our resources).

Just wanna get their toes wet and not exactly putting all their resources into it – hesitation
 A group that is dealing with promotion but they are not offering it

“if you put in this amount...this is what the benefit is”

Can you rate that level on a scale of 1 of 10?

1 – the things I said are normal for organizations

Do you find that there are any conflict mechanisms in place? If so, what are they?

Group we have has the same goal in mind. Level-headed individuals. “if anything were to arise (promotional issues), our meetings are crucial for that so everyone can have their input and we may have a discussion about it”

Good to recognize who is the better organization for what and that intuition is so important

“ no one has ever felt ignored or covered up, under appreciated”

That committee mindset and having a moderator is crucial.

How would conflict be dealt with if it were to arise?

What was the primary motivator in creating this “coalition”? Was it knowledge of the community’s issues with food insecurity?

Definitely was the motivator. More so on the lines about getting education out there. “Very progressive community” “high level of knowledge, motivation and activity within our local food system and certain populations that need more than others”

Educating people and making them more aware of local food resources...more of a focus this year on “underprivileged or lower socio-economic class (HHC, CCC, Hos House) really reaching out to them more....I honestly think we could’ve done for”

“a growing focus...doing things with those nonprofits so it is getting out there”

more unique approaches to it (what she wishes to see)

Education. Inclusive of all populations. Fluctuate which ones they are targeted to.

Is there a shared as well as united objective?

Definitely. All across the board. Each organization works with different populations – a fascinating thing to see people collaborate for same objective with different resources”

How would you describe how the coalition is run or managed?

Loosely. Being the second year, neat to see the same people come back. Main binding ingredient is every body’s common passion...get enjoyment out of the mission. Way it’s run is really....contribute what you can.

Extension office main sponsor and facilitator. Ext. Office uses their resources to attract other members of the community. Programs that they fund or teach at certain locations. BRWIA and Ext. (very connected with everybody)

A lot of round table discussion-type style. Margie has agenda, sign up sheets, materials

BRWIA – Promotional outlet

Local First – logo and rack cards

Margie – facilitates the whole process, delegates different responsibilities

Individuals taking responsibility

“speaks volumes that 100% of people involved last year are back again and at a fuller extent”

Would you say that there is a “formal centralized coordinating unit” for the coalition?

Margie and Ext. Office. Other people that do just as much necessary contributions. “awareness of connections that come out of extension office is huge”

Is there some form of governance by a body or one (multiple) of the organizations involved?

Would you say that this was an interorganizational network if the definition is as follows: A long term cooperative relationship among organizations in which each entity retains control over its own resources but jointly decides with others on their collective use? (Goal-directed network)

Defines that to a T. Everybody has their thing that propels their organization and then bring it together to propel our missions' combined.

Everyone stays very connected in our GMP off-season.

Both individual minded and "helps that everybody has similar visions (sustainability, healthy food and local eating)" but they go about it in different ways"

Are there any superior-subordinate relationships in this coalition?

3- ext., BRWIA, High Country Grown and/or Local First as far as necessary resources are concerned

WFM, Hos House, Community Care Clinic, Sustainability Office, individuals in community (Judith Phoenix) The Hems (moral focused very big in the community), Proclamation in Town meeting Harman, Health Department (huge funding source) → Rachel Miller

other people offer ideas, back up event planning

As a coalition, is there a solid shared definition of the issue in the High Country that you are seeking to eradicate?

Yes. Focused broadened. Education → throughout different counties and populations, reach out to further counties at every meeting is brought up. Trends in growth.

There was a debriefing meeting at the end of last year

What worked what didn't work

Did it on a google doc as well with a feedback on different events

Did it again at the start of this planning period, effective, realistic ? built on top of that with new ideas – same core group of planning was there

As a coalition, is there a solid shared definition of success as far as Greening My Plate goes? For the coalition as a whole?

Wanna see education get out there – “having people become more familiar with the community’s recourses...enlarging that scale”

Did you have a personal relationship with anyone in the coalition’s organizations before it (and Greening My Plate) was created?

YES! I’ve worked with BRWIA, Local First (Local appetite) a LOT with Margie before interning with her, cooking with Health Department

Was there research conducted by you, the coalition or any specific body that was utilized to justify the creation of this coalition and Greening My Plate?

Not to my knowledge. Extension office and BRWIA – obligated to do some research on what they are involved with.

With the community we live in, it is such a “known thing of what we want to accomplish”

Collaboration is “a more efficient way”.

Vision Committee, health care collaboration more conflict but so huge and important

Is the coalition/event funded? If so by what or whom?

Do a lot of this without funding. What organization’s can bring what to the table based on what they can apply for (grants), resources they have that they don’t have to pay for.

Local First – printing materials \$\$\$ (biggest monetarily)

Other organizations with their time (Website – BRWIA)

Donated or people bring it with them

Appendix H

This is the Internal Review Board Exemption Request form for research with human participants. I received approval for the exemption by the IRB on March 18, 2015, via email.

Exemption Request for Research with Human Participants

*Instructions: **Complete and send the request form electronically to irb@appstate.edu.***

***Note:** checkboxes can be checked by putting an "x" in the box.*

Research activities are not exempt if prisoners, fetuses, or pregnant women are **targeted** for participation; if participants will be exposed to more than minimal risk; or if the research involves deception of the participant.

Section I: Study Description

1. Study Title: **Organic & Intentional: A study of nonprofit collaboration in the High Country, its intricacies, and effects on the surrounding community.**

2. Principal Investigator (PI) and responsible faculty member if student is the PI:
Genevieve Paige Parshley
Department(s): Honors/Department of Communication

3. **Purpose of research:** To conduct an in-depth case study of the community's Greening My Plate Event and corresponding coalition for my thesis on nonprofit collaboration and organizational ecology.

4. **Procedures of the research as they relate to participants:** Recruitment is done solely by suggestion by other participants and word of mouth. Notes of observation will also be taken at Greening My Plate committee meetings. The data will all be qualitative minus some monetary and funding facts. Data will be stored on my computer.

5. By submitting this request, the PI (and responsible faculty member if PI is a student) accepts responsibility for ensuring that all members of the research team: 1) complete the required CITI training and any other necessary training to fulfill their study responsibilities, 2) follow the study procedures as described in the IRB approved application and comply with [*Appalachian's Guidelines for the Review of Research Involving Human Subjects*](#) and all IRB communication and 3) uphold the rights and welfare of all study participants.

The parties (i.e., the IRB and the PI and responsible faculty member if PI is a student) have agreed to conduct this application process by electronic means, and this application is signed electronically by the Principal Investigator and by the responsible faculty member if a student is the PI.

My name and email address together constitute the symbol and/or process I have adopted with the intent to sign this application, and my name and email address, set out below, thus constitute my electronic signature to this application.

Genevieve Paige Parshley
genevievepparshley@gmail.com

PI Name

PI Email address

Dr. Janice T. Pope

Faculty Advisor Name if PI is a student
PI is a student

popejt@appstate.edu

Faculty Advisor Email address if

03/04/2015

Date

6. Dissemination of Results

- ☒ I plan to publish (thesis, dissertation, journal, book, etc.)
☐ I plan to present off campus (conferences, etc.)
☒ I plan to present on campus (Celebration of Student Research, Capstone, etc.)
☐ I will not publish or present outside of class assignment
☐ Other: describe

7. Type of research, check all that apply:

- ☐ Faculty Research ☒ Dissertation/Thesis
☐ Product of Learning/ Capstone Research
☐ Class Project – Course Number:
☒ Other: Honor's Thesis

8. Source of Funding:

- ☒ Not Funded ☐ Funds Awarded ☐ Funds Pending
☐ Federally Funded ☐ University Funded: describe

If funds awarded/pending, provide sponsor name, Sponsored Programs number:

9. What, if any, relationship exists between the researcher(s) and agencies (e.g., schools, hospitals, homes) involved in the research? *Attach appropriate approvals (e.g., letter of agreement) from agencies involved in the research.*

Section II: Research Personnel

1. Enter each team member (including PI) in the table below. All members of the team must complete the [required CITI training](#).

(Note: Changes in personnel must be sent to the IRB. Changes can be submitted via email with the information below. If you need additional room, add rows by: right click, insert, and then insert rows below)

Name	Role (e.g., PI, co-I, Research Assistant, Research Coord., Faculty Advisor, etc.)	Receive IRB Correspondence (Y/N)? If yes, provide preferred email address.

2. Are there any known or potential conflicts of interest related to this research?

Conflict of interest relates to situations in which financial or other personal considerations may compromise or have the appearance of compromising an employee's objectivity in meeting University responsibilities.

☒ No ☐ Yes

Section III: Participant Population and Recruitment

1. Number of participants sought: 3

2. Targeted Participant Population (check all that apply):

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Adults (≥ 18 yrs old)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> College Students (only 18 or older)
<input type="checkbox"/> Minors (< 18 yrs old) Age range:	<input type="checkbox"/> College Students (under 18 may participate)
<input type="checkbox"/> Minorities	<input type="checkbox"/> Cognitively or emotionally impaired
<input type="checkbox"/> Inpatient participants	<input type="checkbox"/> Non-English speaking
<input type="checkbox"/> Outpatient participants	<input type="checkbox"/> Employees of a profit or non-profit organization
<input type="checkbox"/> International research	

Section IV: Risk

Minimal risk means that the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the research are not greater in and of themselves than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.

Assessment of level of risk:

☒ This study contains no more than minimal risk.
☐ This study contains risks that are more than minimal.

Section V: Exempt Categories

Please select the category or categories most applicable to your research and answer the question(s) associated with any selected categories:

- ☐ **Normal Educational Practices and Settings (1)**
 Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal education practices, such as (a) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (b) research on the

effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

1a. Explain why the research procedures are normal educational practices in a commonly accepted educational setting:

1b. If research includes accessing identifiable educational records, how will the records be protected from unauthorized access?

1c. If research includes accessing identifiable educational records, when will access to the records for research purposes be terminated? Or, if identifiable educational records are copied for research purposes, when will the identifiable information be destroyed?

☐ **Educational Tests, Surveys, Interviews, or Observations (2)**

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), surveys, interviews or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that participants can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of an individual's response(s) outside of the research setting could reasonably place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation. [Note: Surveys or interviews which include mirrors as subjects are not included in this exempt category.]

2a. Can the information collected be linked (directly or indirectly) to participants?

☐ Yes ☐ No

2b. If the answer to 2a is yes, would an accidental disclosure of the information damage a participant's reputation, employability or financial standing?

☐ Yes ☐ No

☐ **Identifiable Subjects in Special Circumstances (Public Officials or Federal Statutes) (3)**

Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), surveys, interviews, or observations of public behavior that are not exempt under (2) of this section, if: (i) the human subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office; or (ii) federal statute(s) require(s) without exception that the confidentiality of the personal identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter.

3a. Explain why the research applies to this category:

☐ **Collection or Study of Existing Data (4)**

Research involving the collection or analysis of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens, if such sources are a matter of public record or if the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

4a. All of the data/specimens involved in the study have already been collected: ☐ Yes ☐ No

4b. The investigators will not record any information that can be linked directly or indirectly to participants:

☐ True ☐ False

4c. The data/specimens are considered Protected Health Information and are subject to HIPAA Privacy Policy:

☐ True ☐ False

☒ **Public Benefit or Service Programs (5)**

Research and demonstration projects which are conducted by or subject to the approval of, department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine: (i) public benefit or service programs; (ii) procedures for obtaining benefits or services under such programs; (iii) possible changes in or alternatives to such programs or procedures; or (iv) possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under such programs.

5a. Explain why the research applies to this category: I am studying how the agriculture-focused community of both nonprofit and for-profit organizations is collaborating in order to better serve the High Country. The research is also seeking to better understand the style of collaboration in the coalition behind Greening My Plate and if it is as effective as it could be.

☐ **Taste and Food Evaluation and Acceptance Studies (6)**

Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, (i) if wholesome foods without additives are consumed or (ii) if a food is consumed that contains a food ingredient at or below the level and for a use found to be safe, or agricultural chemical or environmental contaminant at or below the level found to be safe, by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

6a. Explain why the research applies to this category:

Section VI: Informed Consent

1. Consent to participate in the research will be sought by providing (please check all that apply):

- ☒ A statement of the purpose of the research.
☒ An explanation of the procedures of the study.

- ☒ If there are foreseeable risks, benefits to the participant, or compensation, they are explained.
- ☒ An explanation that participation is voluntary and that there are no consequences if the subject to participate or decide to discontinue participation (at any time).
- ☒ Contact information for the investigator and faculty advisor if the investigator is a student.

If any of the consent items above are not checked, please explain why it is impractical to explain this information to participants:

2. Will participants sign an informed consent?

☒ Yes ☐ No

Please **send an electronic Word attachment (not scanned) of this application and any accompanying materials (e.g., informed consent, surveys, interview questions) to irb@appstate.edu**. Thank you for taking your time to promote ethical human participant research